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SERMON

PREACHED TO THE
2ND SPECIAL SERVICE BATTALION
OF THE
ROYAL CANADIAN REGIMENT,

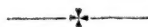
In Westminster Abbey,

BY

THE VENERABLE BASIL WILBERFORCE, D.D.,

ARCHDEACON OF WESTMINSTER,
CHAPLAIN TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
SELECT PREACHER BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

ON ADVENT SUNDAY, 1900.



Presented by Captain J. BARLOW to the Officers and Men.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, we thank Thee that Thou hast prospered the forces of our Empire. Bring, we humbly beseech Thee, this warfare in South Africa to a speedy close. Grant that a just and merciful peace may repair the losses and heal the wounds of war. Unite, we pray Thee, in the bond of brotherly charity those who have been at enmity, and continually guide the counsels of our Empire to the promotion of Thy glory and the lasting welfare of mankind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Isaiah xlix., parts of verses 8 and 11.

"THUS SAITH THE LORD . . . I WILL MAKE ALL
MY MOUNTAINS A WAY."

THERE is, in the inwardness of this utterance, an application appropriate to the memorable occasion of the visit to this historic Temple of a detachment of the Canadian contingent, who have been bravely sharing the burden of the military difficulties of the Mother-Country.

God says, "I will make all my mountains a way." Considered, first, in its surface interpretation, the saying represents one of those inspired appeals to the imagination which abound in the Immortal Literature we name the Bible. It challenges thought by the presentation of a paradox. There is little connection between a mountain and a way. Since the world was, mountains have been the obstructors of ways, the natural frontiers between nations, the barriers that kept peoples separate, disunited, hostile—"mountains interposed," says Cowper,

"Make enemies of nations who had else,

Like kindred drops, been mingled into one."

And yet, even considered thus in the natural sphere, we are prepared for the hidden teaching; for the challenge of a mountain has ever excited the energetic determination to surmount it. The physical and moral strength of the

race is invigorated through the opposition of mountains, and man, as God's vice-gerent, in his work of subduing the earth, has everywhere, in all lands, amongst all peoples, made "the mountains a way"—a highway for commerce, travel, discovery—until at last the inspired utterance becomes the motto of man's recreation, and he looks upon the mountains of the world as a challenge to an achievement, as something contradicting him, to be made into a way, or he will perish in the attempt.

The spiritual stimulus of the beautiful saying is even more true. There is a fascination, an inspiration, in these prophets of natural scenery, through which the Infinite Soul immanent in all things, makes His mountains a way, a way to gaze into His face, to think into His heart, to rest in His promises. Stand on the plateau of Darjeeling, 8,000 feet above the sea, surrounded by the solemn snow-giants of the Himalayan range; watch the first sunbeam crown with glory the head of Kinchinjunga, the king of the mountains, rising sheer five miles in height above the plains, and a sensation wholly undefinable will possess you. You will be conscious that what is grandest on the earth most impels the heart to rise above the earth, and those ceaselessly upward-pointing fingers of the everlasting hills will re-echo the voice recorded by Isaiah, "I will make all my mountains a way."

And yet, obviously, such considerations are but playing with the text. Eliminate this noble comprehensive declaration of the purpose of God from its historical setting, from its surface interpretations, sweep away from it all limitations, accept it as a revelation of the permanent attitude of the Creative Intensity whom Jesus Christ has taught

us to call Our Father, and it implies a solution of the riddle of this painful earth; an obliteration of the conception of a Deity whose resources are inadequate to control opposing agents actions or wills; a clear acknowledgment of responsibility on the part of the Creator and Master of the Universe; and a revelation that the education of the human race is effected, not by indolent contemplation, but by energetic struggle against mountains of opposition; that the true life of the human soul can only emerge from deep contrasts; that the sternest moral mountain in this perplexing world, the existence and permission of evil, is not an element of destruction, but a divinely-provided resisting agency destined to be converted into God's highway to the formation of character. "To him that overcometh," that maketh mountains a way, "will I grant to sit on My Throne." "My peace I give unto you," said the Divine Representative of the Race, and His peace was not the unruffled contentment, the *dolce far niente* that the world calls peace, but a struggle, an attainment, a victory through the mountain of Gethsemane and Calvary. Here, then, lies the teaching of the inspired epigram that I would emphasize. The Ruler of the Universe says, "I will make all my mountains a way." Mark the impregnable foundation of human assurance and "rest in the Lord." Mark the glorious promise that "good shall fall at last, far off, at last for all." Mark the authoritative unconditional declaration of the Divine "I will," which nothing on earth, or under the earth, or in Gehenna, can ever vary. The Almighty Creative Spirit, Whose resources are adequate to all emergencies, has said "I will," and it is enough. Mark, once more, the clear assump-

tion of responsibility, "MY mountains." They are God's mountains that seem to hem us in. Let this truth be rooted into the verities of our being. There are not two eternal elemental principles alongside each other. Such a conception is destructive of the whole idea of God. When once you have grasped the universality and perfection of God; when, with St. Paul, you can say, "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things"; when, with Jacob Boehme, the inspired father of philosophy, you have recognised that any definition short of "God in all, and all in God," virtually annihilates the conception of God, you have taken leave for ever of that miserable materialism which refers good and evil to different elemental creative sources; you recognise the logical impossibility of any essence or spirit or principle existing in antagonism to the resistless omnipotence of God, even for the fraction of a second; you know that all mountains, however precipitous, however threatening, are God's mountains; that there is only one principle at work, only one love pulsing through all things, only one purpose evolving which was involved from the very beginning, and that He will, in His own way, in His own time, by His own methods, make all His mountains a way.

The briefest analysis of human history will prove that God has always made His mountains a way; that better is always being evolved from worst; that what men call evil has ever been the stimulus of improved social action, of material enterprise and aggressive discovery. The mountain of suffering and sorrow has produced the world's greatest poets, teachers, discoverers, reformers, heroes, martyrs. A

shipwreck, a fire, a mine explosion, an epidemic, a war, what moral heroism have they revealed ! The existence of the mountain has proved a challenge to make a way, and a way has been made, and the Race has been invigorated. For example, this soul-harrowing war, in which you have taken so energetic a part, has afforded an illustration of the operation of the hidden intelligence that dominates all things, making a mountain into a way. Criticism of the immediate causes of the war is not within the province of men of the profession of arms—

Yours not to reason why, yours but to do or die.

And so long as the evolution of civilization finds itself confronted by corrupt social anachronisms, so long will there remain the necessity for the dire alternative of war ; and you who lay down your lives in simple obedience to the call of duty, whatever may be said to the contrary, are, in the inwardness of things, carrying out the purpose of the Ruler of the Universe. But who will be found to deny that this deplorable and sanguinary war has, in first causes, elicited some of the highest qualities of the human race ? If quiet resignation, uncomplaining patience, obliteration of social distinctions, fortitude, unselfishness, are fruits of the spirit, then has this mountain been made a way to raise the whole standard of the nation. The glorious deeds of heroism in the field have filled us with admiration and nerved us to emulation. The Victoria Cross has been earned 100 times in South Africa for once that it has been possible to award it ; repeatedly have men risked their lives and given their lives to save a wounded comrade ; and there is no credential with which to enter the spirit-world higher than the inspired verdict—"Greater love hath

no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." War may be, in second causes, as they say, an insult to civilization, a perversion of race-brotherhood; but in the secret of the evolving purpose it often awakens the noblest instincts of man's better nature, which in an atmosphere of indolent peace lie dormant. Again, in how many individual instances has this mountain been made into a way. It is difficult to find expression to the feelings with which I recently passed some hours with the seriously wounded in Netley Hospital. Men are there, shattered, mutilated, worn by fever and by wounds, crushed, in a temporal sense, by a mountain of disability. In every instance I found that the stern reality of the mountain of suffering had been made into a way. A way to a thoughtfulness, an earnestness, a refinement which afforded a conspicuous illustration of Lord Roberts' verdict, that the British soldier in South Africa has behaved like a hero on the battlefield and a gentleman at all times. One young corporal of the 1st Liverpool Regiment has been shot through both his eyes, and is now, after many weeks of dangerous illness and acute suffering, a feeble wreck, blind for life. His confidential conversation is, of course, sacred; but he ended with the words, spoken in quiet earnestness without a suspicion of cant, "I have gained more than I have lost, and I am perfectly happy." God had made his mountain into a way. And, I ask, is there any other power or influence which can thus take possession of a human being, and inspire and purify him, like the power of the evolving Spirit of God working through the *via crucis*? Whereas when he had his eyesight he was blind, now that he is blind he sees. Thus does God make His mountains a way.

I have said that there is, in the inwardness of the inspired epigram, an application appropriate to this memorable occasion.

There is a sense in which you, representatives of the courageous manhood of the Dominion of Canada, you, the impersonated bond between the Mother-Country and the self-governing Colonies, afford a demonstration of this sphere of the Divine activity suggested by the text. You have been God's instruments in making a mountain into a way. A year ago there rested upon the heart of this nation one of those mountains of God through which it is not easy to see a way; a mountain of anxiety, discouragement, uncertainty, though never of despondency or of irresolution. The mountain weighing us down became our opportunity for moral heroism. Touched by that magnetic law of life that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it, thrilled by that mystic sympathy which knits the races of English blood into a sacred brotherhood in time of stress, you hastened to the aid of the Mother-Country in such numbers that the raising of the Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry became a matter of selection. I am aware that it was not the first time that Canadians had rallied under the old flag. In the Crimea, in the Gordon relief expedition, your courage and heroism supported us; but the enthusiasm with which you vied one with another to aid us in our present distress was beyond all precedent, and you have earned the admiration and the undying gratitude of the Motherland. To record your priceless services would be to write a history of the war. There is hardly an action of importance in which you have not had

your share, and the night of the 26th of February, when you, in company with the Royal Engineers, advanced to within a stone's throw of Cronje's laager at Paardeberg, and so virtually necessitated his surrender at dawn on the following morning, is worthy of being recorded amongst the great historic battle scenes that have won the British Empire.

But—and here is my point—by your heroism you have fulfilled a providential function, for you have made the "mountain" of our distress "a way" to our future peace. Before this war we may have been hated by all men, but we were not feared by all men. You have taught the world a lesson; you have unveiled to the eyes of jealous nationalities, ready to take advantage of the international irritations and misunderstandings of the hour, the boundless capacities of the British Empire; you have given reality to the epigram of our barrack-room Laureate:—

What do they know of England, who only England know?

for you have shown that men of English blood clasp hands around the globe. You have shown that, as the statue of Washington at Philadelphia stands on a pedestal constructed of stones quarried from every state of the Union which his genius founded, so the British Empire rests on a pedestal of living stones, quarried, not in England alone, but in every quarter of the globe; and, amongst the historic incidents that have marked the growth of our national life, this determined rally of the great self-governing Colonies to the aid of the Mother-Country in this war stands absolutely unique. Moreover, the lasting living influence upon the world of your magnificent

patriotism is in the direction of future peace, for if ever the time is to come when

The war drum throbs no longer
And the battle flag is furled
In the Parliament of Man,
The federation of the world,

it will be when the world at large recognizes that the British Empire is built upon the living foundation of the hearts of a free people; a people who, while contemptuously indifferent to a paper campaign of ridiculous slanders, engineered by a venal foreign press, are so saturated with the true spirit of Imperialism that, upon the slightest sign of attack upon England, they will rise in arms, not only from Canada, but from the remotest Antipodes, with the challenge "hands off the Mother-Country, whoso toucheth England, toucheth the apple of our eye."

Thus have you made our "mountain" "a way," and you have taken out of the ideal into the real the aspiration expressed in the lines—

Now victory to our England,
And where'er she lifts her hand
In freedom's fight, to rescue right,
God bless our dear old land.

Canadian brothers, if in the philosophy of the human mind gratitude be "the memory of the heart," there is no need for you to say "dinna forget." Accept my assurance that **ENGLAND WILL NEVER FORGET.**

Finally, upon myself, upon all, I desire to impress the inspired promise, "I will make all my mountains a way."

It is the irrefragable basis of intelligent optimism. In spite of the difficulties, and horrors, and failures, in a

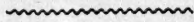
world wet with tears, it enthrones one Infinite responsible Love-Spirit behind all phenomena. Believe it, think into it, co-operate with it, live in it, not in fatalism, but in intelligent son-ship. We are adjured, as you know, on Advent Sunday, to "put on the armour of Light"; *this is the armour of light*. It is thought-immersion into God. It is the strong act of personal faith that takes the Kingdom of Heaven by mental force, that crosses the threshold of the visible and penetrates into the world beyond the senses. It is to drink to the full of the self-manifestation of the character of God in Jesus Christ, and still to be certain that no symbol, no manifestation however exalted, can enclose within a single limitation the splendour of that Eternal Wisdom, Love and Power, ensphered in which we blind, perplexed mortals really "live and move and have our being." It is to be absolutely, irrevocably certain that, in the midst of life's bitterest trials and perplexities, God is making all His mountains into a way, because, inasmuch as all is in God and God is in all, and His Name is Love—

All discords must to one concord lead,
Whose every missing note would leave a need.
A concord—
Deep, unimagined as a world untrod,
An Infinite Harmony whose name is God.



12✓

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.



God save our gracious Queen ;
Long live our noble Queen ;
 God save the Queen.
Send her victorious ;
Happy and glorious ;
Long to reign over us ;
 God save the Queen.

Thy choicest gifts in store ;
On her be pleased to pour ;
 Long may she reign.
May she defend our laws ;
And ever give us cause ;
To sing with heart and voice ;
 God save the Queen.

*Lord let wars' tempest cease ;
Fold the whole world in peace ;
 Under Thy wings.
Make all the nations one ;
All hearts beneath the sun ;
Till Thou shalt reign alone ;
 Great King of Kings.

** This Verse was composed by LONGFELLOW.*

